

#### UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

September 8, 2021

OFFICE OF LAND AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The Honorable Ron Johnson United States Senate Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Johnson:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Superfund program is proposing to add the Unity Auto Mart site, located in Unity, Wisconsin, to the National Priorities List (NPL) by rulemaking. The EPA received a governor concurrence letter supporting the listing of this site on the NPL. Listing on the NPL provides eligibility for federal cleanup funding for the nation's highest priority contaminated sites.

Because this site is located within your state, I am providing information to help in answering questions you may receive from your constituents. The information includes a brief description of the site and a general description of the NPL listing process.

If you have any questions, please contact me or your staff may contact Raquel Snyder, in the EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations, at (202) 564-9586. We expect the rule to be published in the Federal Register in the next several days.

Sincerely,

Barry N. Breen

Acting Assistant Administrator

Enclosures



# **NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST (NPL)**

\*\*\*Proposed NPL Site\*\*\*

August 2021

# UNITY AUTO MART | Unity, Wisconsin Marathon County

## **Site Location:**

The Unity Auto Mart site consists of chlorinated solvent contamination in groundwater originating from the Unity Auto Mart, a former dry cleaner, located in Unity, Marathon County, in central Wisconsin.

# ▲ Site History:

Unity Auto Mart (UAM) is a former gas station/convenience store, coin-operated laundromat, and dry cleaner. UAM first started as gasoline station in the early 1960s. A dry-cleaning business was added later and operated between 1979 to 1984. The UAM gas station changed hands several times, remaining open until 2012. The property is now vacant and tax-delinquent. The state of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) first identified chlorinated solvents at the UAM property in 1999. By 2014, WDNR requested EPA's assistance when numerous potable private wells in the Village of Unity were discovered to be contaminated with tetrachloroethene (PCE) and its breakdown products.

#### **■** Site Contamination/Contaminants:

The chlorinated solvents found in drinking water wells include PCE and its breakdown products, trichloroethylene (TCE), cis- and trans-1,2-dichloroethylene (1,2-DCE), and vinyl chloride. To date, the chlorinated plume has contaminated 17 private wells, including eight wells with levels above the Safe Drinking Water Act Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs).

# **## Potential Impacts on Surrounding Community/Environment:**

The contamination plume is currently estimated to span approximately 25 acres. Studies confirm that the contamination has reached the two aquifers that supply drinking water to the area. At least 17 private wells contain chlorinated substances and approximately 235 residents within half a mile of the site are at risk. Most residents within a 4-mile radius of the Unity Auto Mart facility rely on private groundwater wells for drinking.

# Response Activities (to date):

WDNR provided carbon filters or alternate water supplies to residents whose drinking water wells contained PCE and TCE exceeding standards. The EPA has assisted WDNR with monitoring and delineating the extent of contamination.

# **■ Need for NPL Listing:**

The state of Wisconsin referred the site to the EPA because substantial investigations and long-term cleanup are required. Other federal and state cleanup programs were evaluated but are not viable at this time. The EPA received a letter of support for placing this site on the NPL from the state.

[The description of the site (release) is based on information available at the time the site was evaluated with the HRS. The description may change as additional information is gathered on the sources and extent of contamination. See 56 FR 5600, February 11, 1991, or subsequent FR notices.]

For more information about the hazardous substances identified in this narrative summary, including general information regarding the effects of exposure to these substances on human health, please see the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) ToxFAQs. <u>ATSDR ToxFAQs</u> can be found on the Internet at https://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/index.asp or by telephone at 1-800-CDC-INFO or 1-800-232-4636.



# NATIONAL PRIORITIES LIST (NPL)

## WHAT IS THE NPL?

The National Priorities List (NPL) is a list of national priorities among the known or threatened releases of hazardous substances throughout the United States. The list serves as an information and management tool for the Superfund cleanup process as required under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). The NPL is intended primarily to guide EPA in determining which sites warrant further investigation to assess the nature and extent of public health and environmental risks associated with a release of hazardous substances.

There are three ways a site is eligible for the NPL:

## 1. Scores at least 28.50:

A site may be included on the NPL if it scores sufficiently high on the Hazard Ranking System (HRS), which EPA published as Appendix A of the National Contingency Plan. The HRS is a mathematical formula that serves as a screening device to evaluate a site's relative threat to human health or the environment. As a matter of Agency policy, those sites that score 28.50 or greater on the HRS are eligible for inclusion on the NPL. This is the most common way a site becomes eligible for the NPL.

#### 2. State Pick:

Each state and territory may designate one top-priority site regardless of score.

## 3. ATSDR Health Advisory:

Certain other sites may be listed regardless of their HRS score, if all of the following conditions are met:

- a. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has issued a health advisory that recommends removing people from the site;
- b. EPA determines that the release poses a significant threat to public health; and
- c. EPA anticipates it will be more cost-effective to use its remedial authority than to use its emergency removal authority to respond to the site.

Sites are first proposed for addition to the NPL in the *Federal Register*. EPA then accepts public comments for 60 days, responds to the comments, and places those sites on the NPL that continue to meet the requirements for listing. To submit comments, visit <a href="https://www.regulations.gov">www.regulations.gov</a>.

Placing a site on the NPL does not assign liability to any party or to the owner of any specific property; nor does it mean that any remedial or removal action will necessarily be taken.

For more information, please visit www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/npl/.